

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-10 ISO-00 SS-15 SP-02 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

USIA-06 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 INR-07 LAB-04 NSAE-00

RSC-01 SIL-01 FEAE-00 /073 W
----- 068793

R 071514Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8048
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
USMISSION EC BRUSSELS
USMISSION OECD PARIS
USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS
USMISSION GENEVA
AMCONSUL BELFAST
AMCONSUL EDINBURGH
AMCONSUL LIVERPOOL

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, UK, PINT

SUBJECT: MINERS' NEGOTIATIONS MOVED TO THE FRONT PAGES

1. BEGIN SUMMARY - BRITISH MINERS ARE BACK ON THE NATION'S
FRONT PAGES AGAIN AS NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE NATIONAL
UNION OF MINeworkERS (NUM) AND THE NATIONAL COAL BOARD
(//CB) APPROACH THE DECISIVE STAGE. THE NUM LEADERSHIP
YESTERDAY REJECTED -- UNANIMOUSLY -- AN APPROXIMATELY
22 PERCENT INCREASE IN BASIC RATES OFFERED BY THE NCB
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AS BEING FAR SHORT OF THEIR DEMANDS FOR A "SUBSTANTIAL"

INCREASE. TALKS ARE CONTINUING, AND IT IS TOO EARLY TO PREDICT WHETHER A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT -- WITHIN THE SOCIAL CONTRACT -- WILL BE ACHIEVED BY MARCH 1ST, WHEN THE AGREEMENT TERMINATES. END SUMMARY

2. THE NUM EXECUTIVE WILL MEET NEXT WEEK TO CONSIDER SOME SPECIFIC PROPOSALS OF ITS NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE. THESE CALL FOR 63.50 POUNDS PER WEEK FOR FACE WORKERS; 50 POUNDS PER WEEK FOR OTHER UNDERGROUND WORKERS, AND 44 POUNDS PER WEEK FOR SURFACE WORKERS IN CONTRAST TO NCB OFFER OF 55, 44 AND 39 POUNDS PER WEEK RESPECTIVELY, FOR THESE CATEGORIES. (PRESENT RATES ARE 45, 36, AND 32 POUNDS PER WEEK RESPECTIVELY, PLUS A 4.40 POUNDS A WEEK THRESHOLD, OR ESCALATOR, PAYMENT.) IN EFFECT, THE NEGOTIATORS ARE ASKING THE NUM EXECUTIVE BOARD TO INSIST ON WAGE INCREASES WHICH ARE MORE THAN TWICE AS LARGE AS THE NCB OFFER AND ABOUT 25 PERCENT ABOVE CURRENT EARNINGS.

3. LEFT-WINGERS ON THE NUM EXECUTIVE SUCH AS ARTHUR SCARGILL, A YORKSHIRE LEADER, HAVE EXPRESSED PUBLIC CONTEMPT OF THE NUM OFFER, CALLING IT A 'BAG OF CRISPS' (POTATO CHIPS), BUT JOE GORMLEY (THE NUM'S MODERATE PRESIDENT) WAS HARDLY MORE RECEPTIVE TO NCB OFFER. DURING A CALL MADE ON HIM BY THE CHARGE, GORMLEY INDICATED THAT HE IS NOT OVERLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE POTENTIAL EFFECT OF THE MINERS' DEMANDS ON THE SOCIAL CONTRACT. HE MADE IT CLEAR HE BELIEVES IT IS POSSIBLE TO STRETCH THE CONTRACT IN VARIOUS WAYS TO ACCOMMODATE THE NUM DEMANDS.

4. HE ADDED, SOMEWHAT SARDONICALLY, THAT WHEN OTHER TRADE UNION LEADERS SUCH AS JACK JONES, LEADER OF THE TRANSPORT AND GENERAL WORKERS UNION (TGWU), SAY THEY SUPPORT THE SOCIAL CONTRACT WAGE GUIDELINES OF THE TUC, SUCH PRONOUNCEMENTS APPLY, IN PRACTICE, TO NATIONAL NEGOTIATIONS AND FREQUENTLY DO NOT PLACE LIMITS ON LOCAL LEVEL SETTLEMENTS WHERE THE FOCUS OF NEGOTIATIONS LIES FOR THE TGWU AND MANY OTHER UNIONS. THE MINERS,

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HE NOTED BY CONTRAST, HAVE AN ALL-IN-ONE NEGOTIATION,
SO THAT A DEAL AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL IS THE SAME AS FOR
THE INDIVIDUAL COLLIERIES AT THE LOCAL LEVEL.

5. NEXT WEEK'S NEGOTIATIONS WILL BE IMPORTANT. THE
MINERS' MOOD IS MUCH LESS BELLIGERENT THAN IT WAS IN
THE WINTER CRISIS OF 1973-74, AND EVEN IF THE DISCUSSION
BREAK DOWN THE MEMBERS WOULD HAVE TO BE POLLED INDIVIDU-
ALLY FOR STRIKE AUTHORIZATION. OF COURSE, INDUSTRIAL
ACTION SHORT OF A STRIKE - SUCH AS AN OVERTIME BAN OR
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WORK-TO-RULE - IS POSSIBLE. FOR THE MOMENT, AS ONE NUM

OFFICIAL DESCRIBED THE SITUATION" "THERE IS A BIT OF
SABER RATTLING."

6. IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE THAT A COMPROMISE SETTLEMENT CAN
BE WORKED OUT WITH THE COAL BOARD, WITH PART OF THE
AGREEMENT SUBSUMED UNDER WAGE RESTRUCTURIZATION OR OTHER
PUBLICLY LESS-VISIBLE CHALLENGES TO THE SOCIAL CONTRACT.
BUT IT WILL BE DIFFICULT, AND NEGOTIATORS FOR SEVERAL
OTHER UNIONS, MOST NOTABLY THOSE REPRESENTING MANY
THOUSANDS OF OTHER POWER WORKERS, ARE EYEING THE COAL
NEGOTIATIONS WITH MORE THAN USUAL INTEREST AS ARE,
UNDOUBTEDLY, A NUMBER OF GOVERNMENT MINISTERS.

SPIERS

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